UNITED
NATIONS

Convention to Combat
Desertification

SUMMARIES OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY SELECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES

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MEXICO

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VI. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE NATIONAL BUDGETS TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN, LIKE AS TECHNICAL ATTENDANCE AND COOPERATION

To date the national resources have represented the only source of financing of the Plan of Action. The main mechanisms promoted by the federal government to facilitate the access of the local actors to the financing sources are the decentralization and a greater diffusion of the existing resources in the diverse programs.

In order to support the previous thing, the federal resources that have subsidy character are forced to publish in the first two months of every year the Rules of Operation and to open to public calls so that the communities can present their proposals, which will be analyzed and described by an established dictaminador committee in the Rules.

To date the financing of the actions against the land degradation had been financed directly with the anticipated national budgetary resources in the effective programs and that are related to the subject. Even though this has allowed some progresses, the financing is insufficient and innovating methods for the mobilization of resources are required.

The exploration of other methods of mobilization of resources includes: the opening of the specific budgetary heading for " Fight Against the Lands Degradation " in the Budget of Expenses of the Federation and the creation of a National Fund for the Restoration and Soil Conservation, both still in processing proc .o and analysis.

VII REVIEW OF THE BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS TO MEASURE THE PROGRESS AND AN ASSESSMENT THEREOF

The development of a tools to measure and to evaluate the progresses of the fight against the degradation of lands is one of the present priorities within the implementation of the CCD at Brazil. The project of the System of Monitoring of the Lands State is at the moment in the phase of conceptual development. During this year a region will settle down prior of the monitoring system, like part of the project " Model of indicators for dry lands ecosystems ", in joint form with Chile and Brazil. From the results of first stage and with base in a report of applicability and potential use of the model, Brazil will have to consider the strategy for its application in other regions and the requirements of technical support and financing with such aim.

PERU

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Concise and comparable information about the progress and restrictions of the implementation process of the UNCCD during the period 1996 to 2000, is presented.

References for its elaboration:

1. Guidelines for the elaboration of the National Reports for the implementation of the UNCCD (November 1999).

2. PAN PERU 1996, document elaborated in a participatory way, under the UNCCD conception (from bottom to top) and conceived as a process plan and not as a document plan. Four (4) years later, it has been evaluated, at a national level, in 3 regional workshops (North, Centre and South) with participation of 150 representatives of governmental and private institutions, universities, specialists, local governments, communities and other base organisms of the population.

ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD IN PERU: 1996-2000

Present Process of Consulting to the Preparation and Implementation of the PAN-PERU 94 of the Agreements of Association with Development Countries Partners and others Entities

The international partners have supported economic and technically to Peru, but too few directly to activities enclosed within the PAN PERU, to actions related with the combat against desertification, such as the national projects like PRONAMACHCS and FONCODES, that also count with funds of the same Peru.

But there are entities of the international cooperation that have collaborated directly, such as the Embassy of the Netherlands, Fundación Ebert, Fundación Kagel or organisms of the same United Nations (UN), like UNDO-PNUD, FAO or another organisms more, like the BID.

Adopted or Planned Measures in the Context of the PAN-PERU 94

Until today, it has not been realized a rigorous systematization of the experience accumulated by Peru in the combat against the desertification, area in which it has a historic tradition for the exemplar management of the coastal arid and mountain semiarid (Sierra) ecosystems and a contemporary course date from the 60' years, with the creation of the National Commission of Arid Zones (CONAZA) and of its active participation in the Nairobi meeting on desertification (1977).

Actually, there are contacts with the national projects to be integrated explicitly within the PAN-PERU process, for example, with PRONAMACHCS, FONCODES, SODs, SENAMHI, CONCYTEC, as well as with inland institutions through regional workshops.

With respect to the implementation of the PAN-PERU, this information is given afterwards, under the subtitle PAN-PERU 94, there is the related with the measures realized in the conservation of natural resources, the institutional organization, the knowledge on desertification, the monitoring and evaluation of this process and the improvement of the economics environment.

With relation to the links with the subregional and regional action programmes, whether there are not too much of them, it has to be emphasized that during the period 1998-2000 it has been realized the V GRULAC in Lima, having Peru an important role.

The local governments have now, within their mandates, to protect the environment; nevertheless, it have not been developed participatory mechanisms of the municipalities in the combat against the desertification.

There are bilateral agreements with the established associations (North and Central), nevertheless, these have not functioned in accordance with the expectations during the period 1996-2000. Likewise, there are directories of institutions and specialists, but they are not operatives, there isn't information flow among them.

Funding Contributions of the National Budgets, as well as the Financing Assistance and the Technical Cooperation

The local actors do not have yet, specifically, measures that guarantee their access to funding sources from the international cooperation. Actually,

only INAFENA, CONAM and RICD-Peru are the institutions related with the possible canalization of the international cooperation.

The most frequent participatory way of participation of the international cooperation have been, up to date, through the support to seminaries, forums and regional meetings.

Among the partners of the international cooperation that have supported with forms the PAN up to date stand out: UNDP-FONC, The Netherlands, FAO, BID, the UNCCD Secretary, and other ones.

The Peruvian State contributes designating part of its budget to the implementation to the UNCCD through the functioning of INFENA, but it has not indicated, in a explicit way, more resources for the combat of the desertification within the PAN-PERU 96, except through the great national projects of conservation of natural resources (water, soil, ...) and combat against the poverty.

The funding priorities will be in function of the new guidelines that will be established in the new PAN-2000 Peru.

Reference Points and Indicators utilized to Measure the Progress and their Evaluation

Actually, there are efforts to centralize the information on environment, such as the National Service of Environmental Information (SINIA, by its abbreviation in Spanish); or on climatic monitoring at national level, such as the National Service of Meteorology and Hydrology (SENAMHI, by its abbreviation in Spanish); or on regional monitoring of "El Niño" event by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONCYTEC, by its abbreviation in Spanish) with the Organization of American States. All of them and another ones of regional character have improved their capacity of gathering of information; nevertheless, the mechanisms to harmonize these systems have NOT been carry out.

ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PAN-PERU 1996-2000

The PAN-PERU 1996 constitutes, for the evaluation of the implementation of the UNCCD, a very special reference, because it contains the practical measures proposed to develop in the years 1996-2000.

Its content is product of a national evaluative process (three regional workshops) and the outputs can be synthesized in the following way: There is a differentiation between the accomplishment of the PAN-PERU 1996 proposals and the actions realized by the institutions of national and regional character. Very important actions have been realized in the combat against desertification, but at the margin of the PAN-PERU 1996. The more important advances have been in the management of natural resources and environment, the combat against extreme poverty, the mitigation systems and early alert of the effects of drought and El Niño event (1997-1998) and the educational area.

In a very low degree, there have been accomplishments related to the monitoring systems (indicators of desertification) and systems of experts, directories, that have not been disseminated nor implemented.

The areas of information, institutional juridical frame, regional associations and the National Fund of Combat Against the Desertification, have not almost been implemented.

With relation to the collection and use of traditional technologies and knowledges, there are great efforts of the ONGs specially, but it have not been worked from the perspective of combat against the desertification; here remains the task of a great systematization of the accomplishments reached in function of the PAN PERU.

The private sector has participated actively through NGOs, communities, work corporations and, in a less degree, the enterprise sector. There are different experiences about the participation of this sector, since actions with too much conservationist tradition, such the *in situ* conservation of agrobiodiversity by the farmers during several centuries, to investments in irrigation projects in arid zones, that have transformed unploughed soils in cultivated fields in the Peruvian Coast. They were present in the PAN 96 and up to date they are part of the North, Centre and South associations of combat against the desertification. Similarly, the NGOs have an important role in the Coast and Sierra of Peru in the combat against the desertification.

There are minimum contacts of the UNCCD-Peru with other conventions (Climate Change) and agreements (Biological Diversity) yet and one of the great tasks is to overcome this situation, as well as the quantification of the losses generated by the desertification processes.

The lack of coordination and leadership to vertebrate the great number of actions that were carry out during the period 1996-2000 were the more important limitations. There is the consensus of the necessity of develop the guidelines referred to the gender (participation of the woman, family and young people), the traditional technologies and knowledges, the systems of early alert and the local governments, all of them in the combat against the desertification.

Similarly, it is necessary to disseminate with more force the concept of desertification with all its implications, so it can be used explicitly by all the institutions of the Peruvian society implied in the combat against the desertification in Peru.

BOLIVIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the most serious environmental problems faced by our planet and its population is the deterioration of the land resources in dry zones, endangering the processes of sustainable agricultural production. This problem is not a menace for the future, but a devastating reality.

Bolivia does not escape this reality, especially when desertification affects 41 per cent of its territory where millions of tons of arable soil get lost every year causing great losses in land productivity, and a severe diminution of food that endangers the national food security and increases the levels of malnutrition and poverty.

The Bolivian Government worried about this problem has assumed with responsibility, the duty of consolidating the National Dry Zones Development Programme (PRONALDES) in the framework of its environmental policies and General Economic and Social Development Plan (PGDES).

A real sample about this, is the inclusion of different considerations about desertification on the main national strategies, policies, plans and programmes, at national, regional and municipal levels. Among these, it is important to point out the Agro-Technological Transformation Strategy, the Socio-Economic Development Plans and Land Use Plans in those regions affected by this phenomenon. Also, it is important to note specific programmes, such as the Irrigation National Programme, the Emergency Programme against 'El Niño' phenomenon and others.

The policies and strategies mentioned above were promoted from an institutional basis that has changed continuously in relation to modifications in the governmental structure and interventions of the civil society in favor of more participation.

The consolidation of this institutional basis in charge of planning and operation of the National Programme to Fight against the Desertification and Drought (PRONALDES) has two main phases. The first one, characterized by a dynamic institutional framework, conformed by a National Commission at national level, that has consolidated the legal status of the Programme; a Focal Point localized at the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Environment/ Secretariat of Natural Resources and Environment, that promoted the participative planning activities; and Regional Committees that invested their human and economic resources to promote the participation of civil society at regional, municipal and community level.

This institutional framework was in force till June 1998, when the pre-investment funds given by USAID/PL 480 concluded, and the Focal Point initiated a process of renovation of PRONALDES, with a new denomination , 'National Dry Zones Development Programme (PRONALDES II)', changing the policies against desertification towards improvements on living and environmental conditions of those people settled in areas affected by this problem.

In the second phase, this institutional framework disappears due to changes in the Governmental structure, and it is initiated a process of institutional capacity-building, to make it more dynamic, participative and adequate to the new goals of PRONALDES II.

In this sense improvements on the previous structure are promoted by giving more participation to the civil society in all the institutional instances and by operating a new strategy to run the PRONALDES II.

About improvements on the existing structure, there is an emphasis on consolidating the Focal Point, as a instance shared by the public and private sectors capable of promoting changes on the governmental policies and coordinating activities among the National Commission and the Regional Committees.

Actually, the Focal Point is represented by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Planning, that confers the responsibility to the General Direction of Land and Basin Classification, that includes four specialized

professionals, basic equipment (computers and furniture), bibliographic material and a small database.

Among those measures adopted to strengthen the capacity-building of the Focal Point, it is important to mention training of the personnel; introduction of the programme in the political agenda of the Ministry and the positive influence of the International Cooperation towards the institutional stability.

An institutional stability needed to promote real changes in the actual situation, however, the stability on the programme was unstable due to permanent changes on the governmental structure, that leads to the discontinuity of activities among different periods. The implementation process is divided into three main periods. The first one (1994-1997), was very dynamic, characterized by wide participation of several actors in workshops, meetings and other participative activities, which finally were reflected in a document, PRONALDES, 26 projects at pre-feasibility level, and a national presence in the international agenda (COP 1 and COP 2).

The second period (1997-1998), was characterized by the ending of all processes started on the previous period, disappearance of the CNO, and small advances on the PRONALDES consolidation.

The third period (1998-2000), was characterized by active participation by the Focal Point in the international agenda promoted by the UNCCD; fund-raising for those projects and programmes made in the first period, and lobbying at national level to compromise the political support to the programme.

In these three periods, which have characterized the historic process of PRONALDES, the international counterparts were diverse and participated discontinuously. During the first period there existed an effective participation of several cooperation agencies (PNUMA, FAO, Embassy of Netherlands, USAID/PL 480, UNCCD).

In the second period, the Focal Point started negotiations with the Paris Club, specifically with the Governments of Denmark and the United Kingdom, without positive results; finally, in the third period, the participation of the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) and the renewed confidence given by UNCCD and UNDP/UNSO were highlights.

It is clear that the process of implementation of the UNCCD in Bolivia was dynamic, although a little bit in disorder, but each one of those periods mentioned previously has contributed with several activities that are noted below:

- A National Action Programme (PRONALDES) legally recognized at national or international level;
- One document PRONALDES, written and published at national level, conformed by 63 investment projects and 39 for pre-investment;
- 26 projects at pre-feasibility level;
- Methodologies for identification and selection of prioritized areas for intervention against Desertification;
- Rules of functioning at CNO (National Commission and Regional Committees)
- Preliminary Erosion y Desertificación maps;
- A strategy for PRONALDES II implementation;
- Different materials for publicity.

On the other hand, during this period links were established with different ministries, especially with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Rural Development (MAGDR). In the meantime, the internal Directions of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Planning such as: Biodiversity, Environmental Quality, Spatial Planning, Sustainable Forest Development, Strategic Planning and Popular Participation exchanged information and executed joint activities around biodiversity protection, monitoring environmental contamination, forestry management and social control over natural resources in zones affected by drought and desertification.

At regional level, there exists an exchange of information with the Regional Directions of Natural Resources and Environment. At municipal level, there are some approaches to touch this subject, but without formality and order.

The relations with the civil society are trough the Interinstitutional Network of Organizations working against Desertification (RIOD), with whom were organized several joint activities to debate the PRONALDES and nowadays, they are operating some of those projects included in the Programme. Some remarkable examples are KUPMI and SEMTA in the Altiplano and Cebio in the valleys.

At subregional level, there are tight relations with the Subregional Action Programmes (SAP) in the Chaco and Puna, with whom the Focal Point maintains permanent contacts and meetings in order to operate joint activities.

The National contribution from the National General Treasure to PRONALDES from 1994 to the present is approximately US$419,414. These resources were brought regularly for the functioning of the National Focal Point, considering that only a part of it was effectively used for the purposes of the Programme.

The PRONALDES financial strategy to operate actions at municipal and community level, was to canalize resources through the existing mechanisms (Development Funds), before thinking about creating new mechanisms.

In this sense, all the efforts around fund raising were devoted to strengthening the national capacity to attract more resources to the Campesino Development Fund (FDC) and National Environmental Fund (FONAMA), considering that these Funds were the real ones who funded projects and programmes related to goals of the PRONALDES.

The resources invested in the affected region by this phenomenon in the period 1994 - 2000 are approximately US$12'458.000 by the FDC and US$1'456.000 by FONAMA. It is important to note the contribution of other programmes working in the region, such as PASA, PRODEZAVAT, PERTT, PROVECAT, PRONAR, with an approximate contribution of $US8'000.000.

About the information system for monitoring the advances of PRONALDES, there is only a project about this, nevertheless there are some systems available in the Ministry that might help to find the required information, such as the system on Global Changes, Hydrological and Meteorological information system, and SINSAT.

The implementation of the UNCCD in Bolivia was very dynamic: it has a period of planning very active and participative, accompanied by a favorable institutional framework that attract the attention of the international cooperation; however, the operation of PRONALDES II has stumbled by changes in

the programme political priority and changes on the governmental structure at the beginning of this governmental period. Fortunately these changes have been consolidated and the Focal Point has started the operation with renewed forces.

ARGENTINA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Argentine Republic, placed in the extreme south of the American Continent, has a total extension of 3.761.274 km^2, including Antarctic Territory and South Atlantic Islands, being in the sense of surface the 8th largest country in the world. The continental American portion is extended along 3.700 km, between 22' and 55' south latitude, covering 2.758.829 km2. This great extension determines an important climatic variety, from subtropical climate in the north to the extreme colds in the south, predominating the template ones within the major part of the country.

The continental portion can be divided into three great ecological regions, according to the hidric regime: Humid Region, Subhumid and Semiarid Region, and Arid Region, representing these last two the 79 per cent of the total surface, and they are extended from north to south through the whole occidental and south portions of the country. The humid zones, where the ' llanura pampeana' is founded, concentrate 80 per cent of the agricultural and cattle production of the country and 85 per cent of the industrial activity. It has the major density of population, comprising 70 per cent of the total population. The dry zones, or those which have the longest drought periods, are on the side from a productive and social view, with a scarce participation on agricultural, cattle and industrial activities, excepting the irrigation oasis. Within these zones, the income per capita is lower than the national media and the percentage of people with unsatisfied basic necessities goes beyond 40 per cent.

The Secretariat of Sustainable Development and Environmental Politics (SDSyPA), former Secretariat of Natural Resources and Sustainable Development (SRNyDS), National Focal Point to Combat Desertification and Drought, is actively working on the design of the National Strategy of Sustainable Development, according to the assumed commitment to put into practice the Agenda 21. Within this context, Argentina during the last years has been developing several actions in order to formulate and to apply that strategy. It cannot be considered as effectively defined and consolidated yet, being this linked to an intense analysis process, in the framework of new political, economic and social conditions that reach the whole country.

The Argentine Republic has subscribed in 1994 to the International Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), believing that this new international normative tool will become a valid instrument to prevent, to combat and to revert serious desertification processes that our country is currently suffering from.

In 1996, the UNCCD was ratified by the National Parliament, through Law 24.701, which has not been ruled by the Executive power yet.

Within the framework of the national sustainable development strategy, the National Action Program to Combat Desertification (NAP)is being developed, initiated by the former Secretariat of Natural Resources and Sustainable

Development. This coordinates a wide discussion with all public national and provincial institutions and organizations, non-governmental organizations and producers' associations linked to the problem, with the goal to contribute to sustainable development in arid, semiarid and sub-humid zones of Argentina.

The NAP has been formulated with technical and financial support of FAO and UNEP. It has also been important the technical and financial support made by UNSO/PNUD and the Secretariat of the Convention respect to activities of sensitivity, development and concretion of the NAP's draft document. The activities of NAP's formulation finished at the end of 1997 with the presentation of the Basis Document, which includes six strategic areas:

- Provincial, Inter-provincial and Regional Action Programs;
- National Information Network to Combat Desertification and Drought Mitigation;
- Education, Training and Public Consciousness;
- Strengthening of Institutional and Frame;
- Strengthening of Financial-economic Frame;
- Insertion of the NAP into Regional and International fields.

At the national level, in 1996 the Provisional Executive Committee was established, aiming to facilitate the convocation and to grant its development. This Committee gathers representatives from relevant national and regional institutions at political, scientific, educational, sanitary, security levels among others; and representatives from civil organized society such as NGOs and producers' associations. It organized three national meetings and afterwards it has been using the structure of the Environmental Federal Council (COFEMA), composed by representatives from the affected provinces, eventually using resources from the SDSyPA for the activities' development of the Committee.

Since law 24.701 is not ruled yet, the Executive Provisional Committee has no legal capacity nor budget for its functioning, even though the actions for implementing the UNCCD did not stopped.

The National Focal Point, the Secretariat of Sustainable Development and Environmental Politics (SDSyPA), kept on generating strategies to include the discussion about desertification at all levels. Is in that way how NGOs began developing activities through RIOD (International Desertification NGOs Network), as well as provinces through COFEMA, the Secretariat of Science and Technology (SECyT), which included 'desertification' as a priority subject, and INTA and German Cooperation (GTZ).

In April 1999 when The Planning Workshop of the Agreement (former Secretary of Natural Resources and Sustainable Development- INTA-GTZ took place) several members of the NAP's Provisional Executive Committee were participated, in order to jointly determine short-term goals and actions. One of the established priorities was the strengthening of the NAP's Provisional Committee.

In July 1999 the revision of the Basis Document was finished. This opportunity allowed to deepen gender perspective in the strategies of the NAP. To that end workshops of training and diffusion on the subject were coordinated, with the technical and financial support of UNSO/PNUD. These meetings resulted in a Basis Document adjustment, which establishes gender strategies in each of the action areas proposed by the NAP.

The development of the activities that participated on the NAP activities was based on a series of pre-existent projects which at a major or minor emphasis worked on desertification in different provincial territories. Even though the majority of the programs and/or projects did not indicate concretely a goal of desertification control, they did try to identify causes and to propose actions which generated diagnosis and control processes.

The activities of developing and researching centres, together with actions of governmental and non-governmental institutions, have enabled to reach a high level of knowledge of dry zones and to develop technical tools to combat desertification.

It could be proved that from 1994 to the present, several plans, programmes and projects linked to combating desertification and related, in general, with dry zones sustainable development have increased, at national and provincial levels.

It also exists a positive mobilization of some sectors of the national community towards a consolidation of NAP principles. In Argentina this is sustained by the presence of international forums, the goals reached by national programmes, publicly manifested by the Secretariat of the UNCCD in his visit to our country in 1998. Anyway, it is necessary to tighten and deepen the interaction between involved institutions, mainly in the framework of reaffirmation and revitalization of communication and inter-change links, reached on NAPs elaboration.

The priority of the NAP formulation is the insertion of Argentina in Regional (PAR) and Subregional (PAS) orders, with the object of complementing and strengthening involved country's NAPs. In the NAP is established the inclusion of joint programmes convened for sustainable management of natural resources, scientific cooperation and institutions' strengthening.

Within this context, we can point out that Argentina, together with Bolivia and Paraguay, is carrying on the Sustainable Development Subregional Programme of the Gran Chaco Americano. Besides, it is also in process of concretion the Puna Americana Programme, together with Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador.

It has also been formulated a project between Argentina and Chile, which includes gender perspective, and it aims to women producers of both countries, for training and technology transference.

For NAPs elaboration, a work methodology has been implemented, and it is based on a participatory focus 'bottom-up methodology'. In this new process, an important number of persons tightly linked to management and use of natural resources have participated at regional workshops, which permitted to obtain technical information to elaborate the Basis Document.

Agricultural producers, peasants, NGOs, and indigenous communities participated and actively worked with professionals, technicians, scientists, teachers, politicians and representatives from different intermediate entities.

Activities with producers and settlers defined a methodology based on population problems and its relationship with the desertification concept. At the same time, meetings at the provincial level were organized, with

representatives from different public and private institutions. The scheme was established, in a similar way, at community and/or municipal levels.

During 1996 and 1997, 40 meetings and local workshops were organized in order to define programmes that conformed to the NAP's Basis Document. In these activities, more than 2000 representatives from governmental and non-governmental institutions, universities, research centres, producers associations, civil society and members from legislative cameras participated. The central activity of those workshops was to reach consensus between different regional actors in order to grant the Programme's sustainability. When these meetings finalized, the National Provisional Committee meeting was organized in order to analyse the information and experiences gathered at local workshops. During that meeting main tendencies that should be included in the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification were discussed. This mechanism of participation and consulting permitted to obtain documentation used afterwards for the elaboration of the Basis Document, towards the end of 1997.

It has to be pointed out that even though a wide convocation and participation of the society existed during the writing of the Basis Document, members of the population and decision makers still have not been involved and are not conscious about the problem.

The National Focal Point has organized and financed sensitization campaigns on desertification. These campaigns were always assisted by governmental and non-governmental organizations of the regions where they took place.

Even though a communication activity about the actions related to UNCCD has been developed, and this permitted to elaborate the Basis Document, which was distributed to be consulted by everyone involved in the subject; the mechanisms of impact evaluation which allow to identify the evolution of the UNCCD and NAP postulates have not been generated yet.

NGOs have completed an important task linked to the diffusion of the problem, training of producers and technology transference, several times accompanied by the National Focal Point.

Within arid and semi-arid regions, many provinces and institutions of researching and technological transference have started developing programmes and projects included in NAP's strategies and added to the Basic Document.

Even though a detailed researching has not been made yet, during 1998-1999, the Direction of Soil Conservation, depending on SDSyPA, has received the contribution of more than 60 ideas, and projects presented by provinces, researching institutions and NGOs, which allowed to elaborate the National Project to Combat Desertification in Argentina, presented to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). More than 450 small projects from different regions, 91 of them were chosen to be applied through GTZ financing, within the framework of the SDSyPA-INTA-GTZ agreement. Technical contribution and information from different national organisms' areas and researching institutes such as provinces in order to elaborate the basic document of the Programme to Control Soil Degradation and to Combat Desertification in Argentina.

The Programme to Combat Desertification in Argentina does not have a budget of its own yet, but it is a mechanism to optimize financing resources from the most varied sources.

The National Focal Point, annually assigns about US$500,000 from its own financing resources for spending and investing in the management and promotion of the NAP.

At provincial governmental level of the dry region, the financing- economic assignment for its natural resources and environment management is unequal, being establish i a range between 0.02 per cent to 0.5 per cent of the annual provincial budget. If we consider that the added budget (1996-1997) for 17 provinces of the dry region reaches US$10 billion, a total average assignment could be estimated in US$78 million annually.

Respect to scientific and technology levels, several national sources compound an important economic-financing basis. Together with Arid Zones' Institutes Network (IADIZA), National Council of Scientific and Technical Researching (CONICET); Regional Centres of the Water's National Institute (INA); National and Provincial Universities and the Programme of Science and Technique it overpasses US$8 million annually.

Since INTA was created, it has been working on technological development to control resources deterioration within arid zones. During the last years, INTA total budget reached US$120 million annually, from which US$34 million was assigned to salaries and operative spending of 25 Agricultural Experimental Stations and extension agencies of the dry region linked to them.

The Secretary of Agriculture, Cattle Fishing and Feeding (SAGPYA) developed the Social-Agricultural and Cattle Programme (PSA) from 1994 to 1999, which assisted technically and financially to the small-holder - agricultural producers of the whole country - for a global amount of US$ 54 million. From this amount, US$26 million belonged to technical and financing assistance from dry zones' provinces.

Briefly, we can point out that mobilization of internal financing resources for the management, researching and development of dry zones' natural resources in Argentina is not exiguous, but important and sustained, and has to be admitted that the major part of these resources are assigned to salaries of technical and professional staff, which develops different tasks at governmental and academic centres and institutes of the region.

This situation allows to consider that a basis of technical and institutional capacities exists, scattered within the whole dry region, over which incremental financing resources, assigned by national programmes and projects, and by cooperation or international credits' ones, should have a very high cost-effectiveness relationship. Activities of international cooperation in Argentina, related to combating desertification, has been really significant.

Technical and financing support from FAO, UNEP, UNSO IPNUD, the Government of Spain, permitted the elaboration and consolidation of NAP's Basis Document; the beginning of the Subregional Gran Chaco and Puna Programmes; and the deepening of gender subject.

German government cooperation, through GTZ, has been permanent and one of the most developed, even before the UNCCD was created. Within the last ten years, significant projects related to combating desertification have been developed, and as a counterpart more than US$20 million were invested on them.

This support was also present at workshops' development (land tenure, traditional technologies, education, among others) and in small investing projects to combat desertification within different dry regions of the country.

In this process of international cooperation an efficient inter-institutional coordination mechanism has been achieved, through an Agreement Act between the former Secretariat of Natural resources and Sustainable Development, GTZ and INTA, started in 1999 with the aim to support the National Action Programme.

Since 1998 international financing organisms have assumed a more engaged role in cooperation to combat desertification. Argentina has initiated dialogue with IDB for a credit to develop a project to combat desertification which link all dry regions of the country. This will be developed through the execution of different components which include training, investing in infrastructure and networks, equipment and organization of natural resources' users in dry zones.

Up to the present some study and researching components on desertification have been executed in Patagonia (SAGPYA/BIRF) with an investing of US$1 million; in the meantime other ones are being analysed at the national level (SDSYPA/BID) for US$750,000.

The Secretary of Sustainable Development and Environmental Politics, with the support of the International Reconverting and Foment Bank (IRFB), lead a project on native forests and protected areas, with the object to improve their management and conservation at national and provincial levels. Activities of Forest Inventory, Integral Studies and Applied Researching Projects within forest regions associated with dry zones involve a global investing of US$4 million with 40 per cent making up the national component and 60 per cent from the bank.

At another level of investing, SAGPYA initiated, within the framework of the Programme of Provincial Agricultural Services (PROSAP), projects of rehabilitation of great irrigation systems in dry zones affected by salinity and coat outcrop.

The Programme financed by BIDIBIRF invested more than US$16 million over a total assigned of US$65 million in studies and projects for hydric labors.

CUBA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of Cuba is an archipelago, which lies on the westernmost point of the island arc of the Antilles, in the midst of the North American and South American continents. It covers 110,992 km², and consists of the Island of Cuba, the Isle of Youth (Isla de la Juventud) and other 1600 islets and keys, accounting for 0.08 per cent of the Earth's lands. The Cuban island ranks fifteenth among the largest islands of the world.

Cuba has a tropical humid climate featured by marine influence and semi-continental traits. Average temperature ranges from 2°EC to 2°EC. The mean rate of annual rainfall ranges from 800 to 1400 mm, depending on the location on the island and time of the year. Evaporation amounts to up to 2300 mm a year.

According to the political and administrative division, Cuba is divided into 14 provinces and 169 municipalities, including the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud. The population of the island is 11,093,152 million, with a population growth rate of 0,9 per cent and a life expectancy at birth of 75,3 years. Out of this population, 22.0 per cent are under the age of 15, and 13.14 per cent correspond to 60 year-old people and over. Median age of the population is 34 years. Sex ratio is 100.3 men to 100 women. Nearly 20 per cent of the population live in the capital city, Havana.

The Cuban economy is essentially agricultural, relying mostly on sugar and related industries, and also includes fishing, mining and tourism, the latter being the most dynamic sector throughout the last decade.

Land surface devoted to the agricultural practice accounts for 62.7 per cent of the total solid ground; 55.4 per cent of this corresponding to cultivation of sugar cane, coffee, cocoa, citrus, fruits, kenaf, tobacco, pasture, forests, vegetables, grains, roots and tubers.

Four of the five environmental problems identified in the Cuban National Environmental Strategy, namely soil degradation, deforestation, terrestrial and marine water pollution and the loss of biological diversity, are either directly or indirectly induced by agricultural and livestock, sugar and forestry activity. At the same time, they are related to the goals set by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought signed by Cuba in 1995 and ratified in March 1997.

Desertification affects 14 per cent (1,580,996 ha.) of the country's territory. Soil degradation resulting from land mismanagement and land misuse by man in the course of time is the main cause for the emergence of marked signs of desertification. Sub-humid environment sub-areas with fragile ecosystems potentially degrading in aridity cover 866,743 ha., and dry sub-areas account for 714,253 hectares.

The fact that 76.8 per cent of Cuban soils account for the lowest crop yields does not allow deriving more than 30 per cent of the production potential from the cultivable species planted there. This situation .2 indicates that one of the direct effects of desertification is the reduction of soil capacity to produce food and thereby meet the most pressing needs of the population.

In the last few decades there has been an aggravation of the situation due to drought which, by itself and along with other anthropic processes, leads to severe and harmful consequences on an increasing number of socio-economic activities.

An assessment of climatic aridity rates has showed the existence of semi-arid plots of land towards the southern point of Guantánamo and Santiago de Cuba provinces, whereas sub-humid areas cover a sizeable portion of the eastern provinces, the coastline of Camaguey and other sites of the country, which are prone to severe desertification processes.

Strategies and priorities set out in the framework of programmes and policies for sustainable development

From the 1960s, the country became involved in raising the living conditions of the population, and the rational use of natural resources intended

to ensure the economic and social development of territories. Therefore, scientific research was organized, the Pedologic and Agro-chemical Service established and territorial management processes were implemented, giving priority to soil conservation and rehabilitation.

In this stage, the following milestones stand out:

1960. Implementation of Reforestation programmes undertaken during 40 years, which has enabled to increase the forest cover from 14 up to 21 per cent of the country's total area.

1964. Establishment of the National Center for Soils and Fertilizers of the Institute for Soils of the Academy of Sciences of Cuba.

1980-85. Choosing the coastline strip of Maisi-Guantanamo towards the easternmost sector of the country as the most drought-affected area for environmental, economic and social rehabilitation.

1960-90. Conceiving and taking actions to improve soils devoted to agricultural practices, to tackle ineffective drainage and soil conservation for most significantly affected areas of the country.

The above strategies, programmes and decisions made, all led to conducting intensive work to combat already identified effects of soil desertification and drought control.

Successive changes in the country's environmental policy have contributed to improve the capabilities to approach the environmental problems already identified; the following being the most important moments:

- the amendment to the 1992 Constitution, the moment when our Organic Law is enhanced with the inclusion of the concept of sustainable development;
- the establishment in 1994 of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA) and the arrangement, since then, of its institutional system at national and territorial level;
- the development of the National Programme on Environment and Development (Cuban adoption of Agenda 21) and implementation of a National Environmental Strategy and based on this, the development of territorial and sectorial strategies;
- the enforcement of Law 81, Law of the Environment by the National Assembly, on 11 July 1997, of its body of contraventions and other laws and supplementary decrees which make up the environmental legislation system in force;
- the Strategy for international multilateral collaboration for 1999-2000.

Institutional measures formulated to implement the Convention

Prior to 1994, there was the National Commission for Environmental Protection and the Rational Use of the Natural Resources (COMARNA) in Cuba. It was responsible for full implementation and control of the environmental activity in the country. From the Summit of Rio, which was the framework for the

commitment of a wide range of environmental sectors, the Cuban government decided to develop an organizational structure to address the environmental issues, which main components make up the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA). CITMA is comprised in turn of the Environmental Policy Division, the Environmental Agency and its eleven Centres engaged in Management, environmental awareness and scientific research in this field. There are also 14 Provincial Environmental Units, and the remaining bodies of the Central Administration of the State, non-governmental organizations and scientific and social associations, which have undertaken the protection of the natural resources.

CITMA acts as the National Focal Point to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought as well as other international treaties. It is also the coordinator of the National Group to Combat Desertification and Drought, established in July 1996, consisting of 34 representatives from 24 institutions and agencies of the Central Administration of the State, Scientific and Teaching Centres and non-governmental organizations.

As the National Coordinating Body, this Group fulfilled a methodological preparation stage, consisting of meetings, workshops and seminars with good representation and participation of national and local entities. In addition to coordinating the development of the National Action Plan (NAP), this Group was responsible for the arrangement of activities in the context of the National Awareness and Development Campaign, every year, as well as activities on the celebration of 17 June, the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

Work carried out by this Group has been coordinated with other National Groups such as the National Watershed Council (CNC), with which a new approach to the country's environmental work was begun; the watershed being regarded as a basic unit for environmental management. At the same time, this approach becomes a way to bring together all actions to combating desertification, preserving Biological diversity, understanding climate change, and other actions taken by state agencies in the natural context of watersheds.

Back-up participatory process for working out and implementing the action programme

Drawing up the National Programme to Combat Desertification and Drought was one of the Cuban commitments upon ratification of the International Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought in 1997. Therefore, the Government is responsible for its implementation, financial support and fulfilment of foreseen actions. In order to fulfil such commitments, the Government puts forward the operational structures and mechanisms set out in the country as well as its capacity to mobilize all the sectors of the population.

Document preparation relied on the participation of all governmental, scientific, citizen and non-governmental institutions that matter. This ample participation was possible due to the following:

- the multisectoral and multidisciplinary nature of the National Group to Combat Desertification and Drought;

- national workshops attended by the scientific community, local government representatives, administrative leaders from territorial government bodies, farmers and grassroots producers involved in identifying the elements which make up the National Strategy;

- a national campaign for public awareness, education and dissemination of information through the press, radio and television, contests among children and youth in schools located in areas affected by desertification and drought;

- seminars for farmers; joint analysis of areas by technicians and scientists;

- shooting of documentary films and other informational and educational materials and finding alternatives to take information to most far-off communities, for example, developing appropriate transportation means furnished with video equipments and participatory discussion of said films;

- workshops held to work out the different stages of NAP with the participation of representatives from the National Group to Combat Desertification and Drought, the Specialist Group of the National Watersheds Council and other representatives from guest institutions.

Thorough analysis of facts (diagnosis stage) within the NAP was carried out in its entirety by national consultants, based on ample and valuable information available in the country as a result of more than 40 years of scientific research on natural resources as well as the practical experience, the traditional and local knowledge base of rural people and settlers, particularly in affected areas. Information collected and drafted, along with the Country Study on Biological Diversity are documents of an inestimable scientific, technical and practical value, for they are daily work tools for implementing the Plan's actions.

The formulation stage of the National Strategy and further actions for its implementation (Action Plan) was certainly the most painstaking task of the process, due to the inevitable need to match this Strategy with principles and priorities set out in the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought, and the Regional Annex for Latin American and the Caribbean; the environmental law in terms of protection of natural resources and other related issues, in force in the national territory; in Regional and Subregional Action Programmes passed and in force such as the Caribbean Environmental Programme, the Barbados Action Plan for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Regional Action Plan on Desertification and Drought, among others.

Women's participation in this process is particularly apparent in all activities and decision-making levels. Women's involvement and the issue of gender in all National Plans and Programmes has been a permanent concern of the Cuban Government, for example, the implementation of a system of encouragement and facilities for women's education and training, as well as their involvement in labour and policy. Proof-positive of this are the rates of women's participation in the technical and professional labour force of the country, which accounts for 66.1 per cent. It means that women are granted full exercise of equal rights.

Backup consultation process for NAPs design and implementation, and partnership agreement with Party developed countries and other entities concerned.

The consultation process intended to work out the NAP was conducted simultaneously with activities for NAPs implementation in affected areas. The process lasted almost two years during which time 14 provincial workshops were held and attended by more that 500 farmers, producers and representatives from provincial Governments and local institutions. Each territory worked out its plan of action to combat desertification and drought, which was approved by territorial governments and non-governmental entities, with the participation and support of the existing scientific community in each territory. The different progress stages of the plan were shown to the national scientific community, and to national and international specialists. This was likewise submitted to high governmental authorities for consideration. Lastly, the document was subject to revision; criteria thereupon being forwarded, and finally approved in writing by Agencies of the Central Administration of the State, specifically by Entities responsible for NAPs implementation.

Major cooperation agreements include those with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) which, based on the support of the Convention Secretariat and the Cuban Government, served to fund the Project TEMP/INT/913/mul, known as 'National Action Programme to combat desertification and drought: A plan for the utilization and integrated management of natural resources of Cuenca del Cauto (Cauto Watershed)' which amounted to US$159,000.

In cooperation with the German Government through the GTZ Agency, a project is being worked out on 'the support to the implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Drought', to start this year. This will be both national and local in nature; the former, in terms of implementation of the Strategy in the country, and the latter, in terms of the target area to the south of Cauto River Watershed.

Significant support to conduct national and international activities have been given by FAO, IFAD, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). On the other hand, the NAP is involved in actions included in the Regional Action Plan (RAP) to Combat Desertification and Drought, particularly in the context of the Network of Institutions, which make up this RAP.

Steps taken or planned in the context of NAP, including measures to improve the economic environment, preserve natural resources, expand the institutional organization and knowledge on desertification and follow-up and assessment of drought effects.

The National Action Plan is comprised of seven subject areas, which cover major problems identified during the stage of diagnosis, and included in the National Strategy to combat Desertification and Drought as basic lines of work.

These subject areas cover socio-economic development of affected areas; development and tailoring of legal instruments, policies and strategies; citizen education and involvement; scientific research and technological innovation; institutional strengthening; and international cooperation.

The highest priority of the Action Plan is the socio-economic development of affected areas as the best expression of local work. For such purpose, 81 activities of concrete implementation have been listed; plus 17 organizational activities out of which, 13 will be implemented at national level, while 68 will

be implemented at local level. Each step is part of the local plans to combat desertification, taken also in the context of the National Action Plan.

Due to governmental responsibility vested in the Plan of Action, 98 per cent of tasks foreseen are borne out directly or indirectly by Agencies of the Administration of the State, both at central and local level, while joining forces with other national entities and organizations.

Ways and means for implementation of actions of the National Programme to Combat Desertification and Drought focus on two basic lines of work, which take shape as 15 development Plans and Programmes as well as Strategies for implementation of other international agreements to which the NAP is linked, mainly those which address Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

NAP's implementation is foreseen to take place on a short-, mid- and long-term basis, from 1 to 15 years, due to the fact that recovery of affected ecosystems is directly in proportion to the degree of damage and the availability of resources. In addition to their being regarded a biological entity, they call for long-term rehabilitation. Actions are consistent with development areas listed in the Strategy, which in turn includes those concrete actions foreseen at national and territorial level to fulfil the objectives, namely:

- Steps taken to prevent natural and anthropic disasters, such as drought, forest fire, soil degradation processes, deforestation;

- Steps taken for soil recovery and rehabilitation, water quality preservation and sustainable use of natural resources;

- Steps taken to improve the quality of life of the population in affected areas, such as increasing and improving the quality of basic health and educational services, drinking water provision and sewer system and household energy;

- Allotment of financial resources in the national budgets to support implementation as well as financial and technical backup provided according to needs, their identification and priorities.

The Plan of National Economy is the most tangible expression of the realization of the National Budget and the Cuban Economy Planning. Based on this, funds are annually provided to each State entity and agency to carry out actions, which include those to combat desertification and drought. In this sense, administration bodies enhance their plans with investments devoted to the environment and the protection of natural resources.

Accomplishment of this plan of the economy is local in nature and it is performed by Administration Entities whose power reaches the nation, provinces and territorial enterprises. Local governments at provincial and municipal level, as well as within Popular Administration Councils also participate, thereby ensuring direct access by local communities to budget allocation.

At present, the Environmental Fund is being developed, to be administered by the CITMA Environmental Agency. It is expected that this Fund may devote a section to combat desertification and drought, as envisaged in the National Programme to Combat Desertification and Drought.

Review of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress and assessment

During NAP design, several benchmarks and indicators were outlined to be used in Cuba from the technical standpoint for progress assessment of steps taken. They are closely linked to environmental impact indicators introduced to measure and assess the country's environmental status.

With regard especially to land degradation, a research project is being conducted which, based on a 20-level first survey of dry environment areas, will choose those indicators which best suit the Cuban conditions. These references should be authenticated in the space-time framework, and class boundaries determined according to intensity. The purpose of this study was to assess the measurable indicators of the global goals to combat desertification and abate drought effects as well as to contribute to sustainable development of affected areas, based on the island nature prevalent in the Cuban archipelago. In the meantime, some measurable indicators have been chosen which may serve as basic tools to assess increases productivity of soils, the results of actions taken to prevent degradation; for rehabilitation of soils affected; to preserve natural resources and utilize them on a sustainable basis, all of which will benefit the improvement of the living conditions of communities.

CHILE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the result of the obligations assumed by the Chilean Government in relation to the subscription to the Convention to Combat Desertification, which was confirmed by the National Congress and the Executive Office in November 1997. It is our obligation to present this report for its consideration at the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 4).

The report was written based on the suggestions included in the guidelines provided by the Convention's secretariat. They fundamentally aim at aspects such as strategy, participation, institutionalization, support to international cooperation, specific measures adopted, financial contributions, and follow-up and evaluation of the application of the Convention and its National Action Programme (NAP) in Chile.

These guidelines were distributed to all national public and private institutions involved in the endeavours of the Convention in Chile. Among them, there are public organizations mainly attached to the Ministry of Agriculture, research institutions, and NGOs. In short, the questionnaire was given to 23 informant institutions considered relevant in the implementation process of the National Programme.

This report is not just a large compilation of information supplied and actions performed by these institutions; it summarizes relevant facts about the institutional work informed and provides a critical analysis of the state-of-the-art of Conventions implementation and its NAP.

About the strategic aspect as well as the priorities given to the implementation of NAP, the information provided shows that the Convention does not occupy a relevant place within institutional priorities. Furthermore, most of these organizations continue developing a traditional attitude which

corresponds indeed to the Convention's suggestions but does not show an improved strength and articulation due to the application of the NAP.

The most important fact about the institutional aspect is the structural and operational mechanisms has not yet been consolidated and, consequently, it is necessary to have the different actors strengthen their participation and compromise with the Convention. In doing so, we would be aiming at discovering effective mechanisms of participation at the local, regional, and national levels.

With respects to the participation of the different actors involved, it is necessary to point out that important efforts are being made, but these are not enough to get a stronger thrust in implementing the NAP. The scarcity of the institutions' own resources to develop specific activities in the implementation of the Convention in the country and the low priority generally given to it by all actors work against a stronger, wider participation.

The measures adopted in the application of the NAP and UNCCD are diverse. Some of them have their origin prior to the Convention, but in general they reflect a traditional, historical way of operating within the institutions. The measures themselves are quite similar to those related to the way of behaving in the field of desertification in areas such as poverty and degradation of natural resources. These actions imply a budget that, in the last five years, exceeds US$100 million. Moreover, the governmental budget for the next six years is in the order of US$1.5 billion.

What neatly springs up from the report is the fact that the Convention and its NAP must find a specific stage of action which would mainly consist in favouring the processes of institutional articulation, the efficient and effective flow of information, and the development of corporate image in relation to this topic, so as to form a platform not only of action but also of support for the attainment of financial resources.

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UNITED NATIONS

Convention to Combat Desertification

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SUMMARIES OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY SELECTED NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AND OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

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[1] Summaries are reproduced without formal editing by the UNCCD secretariat.

Country Parties are listed by date of ratification of the Convention.

PORTUGAL

The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification was approved on 17 June 1998, and is the result of a widespread participation by agents involved and interested in the issue of desertification, mainly from the most affected regions, in a total of about 2200 people, in strict compliance with the spirit of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

We are now ready to begin the implementation of the NAP, as key requirements were already satisfied:

1. Campaigns to raise public awareness on the issue of the desertification;
2. Creation of conditions for a strong participation of public and private entities;
3. Integrated interdepartmental and multi-disciplinary cooperation, from the drafting of policies up to the preparation of the implementation of specific actions;
4. Creation of a National Committee to Coordinate the NAP and to monitor its implementation;
5. Creation of a National Desertification Observatory, working closely with the National Committee, that will make possible the monitoring and the assessment of the programme's implementation.

A National Coordination Group was created in December 1996 to elaborate the NAP, presided by the Focal Point, including experts from eight ministries, several institutions of the civil service, some of the central departments and others from regional services, for a total of about 30 people. This Group was responsible for the preparation of a synthesis document on "Causes and consequences of desertification in Portugal", which was prepared to give to the public a scientific and technical background for discussion.

The public working sessions were held at the regional level with the participation of the media, universities, environmental NGO's, experts from official departments, teachers from several education levels and individuals concerned with the problem. A Scientific Council was also created to support the National Coordination Group. This Group was composed of 12 experts covering areas such as climate, soil, water, rural development, economy and sociology.

ITALY

The UNCCD has been ratified by the Italian Parliament with the Law n.170 in 1997.

In September 1997, the Italian President of the Council has instituted the National Committee to combat drought and desertification. The Committee has been working on the implementation and the dissemination of knowledge aimed at combating desertification in Italy. Its most important activity has been the involvement of the institutions and the research organizations to coordinate the political action to fight drought and soil degradation and the social, economic, energetic, environmental and cultural aspects of the Mediterranean basin.

In order to implement the UNCCD the Italian Committee has signed several Memoranda of Understanding with different partners: the Food and Agricultural Organization, the Ente Teatrale Italiano, ANPA and Asinara National Park, Fondo

The Government has played its role in the approval of the CIPE deliberation that clearly underlines the different role that the Government and the Regions play in the fight against desertification and drought and foresees the strategic and operative importance of the Regions in the enforcement of the UNCCD with specific programmes at local level.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The Republic of Moldova is a small (33.8 thousand sq. km) and densely populated (129 men/sq. km) country, situated between west border of the Ukraine and east border of Romania. The agricultural sector predominating causes high dependence of the Moldova economy upon weather-climate conditions. In combination with human induced factors droughts rate increase in the areas with natural precipitations deficiency leads to the soils degradation - desertification.

The main document, defining aims, priorities and basic directions of sustainable country development, is "Strategical reference points of socio-economic development of Moldova up to 2005", approved by the Government Enactment (1998). Integration of ecological requirements into sectoral policy and forming of the ecological consciousness at all levels are called as one of the strategical priorities. The Government developed project of National Strategy of Sustainable Development "Moldova-21" (1999).

To the main negative factors, influencing national safety of the country, the Strategy attributes the following: reduced financial possibilities of selection and implementation of the above strategy; real economic depression and ineffective natural resources utilization management; political instability; investments deficit; shadow economy at scale.

The first strategical document in the nature protection area was the long-term Complex Environment Protection and Rational Nature Resources Utilization Programme up to 2005 (1997). Among its major priorities it is necessary to note maintenance of the soils fertility by implementation of the hydrotechnical anti-erosion measures, eroded lands fertility rehabilitation, forest amelioration measures, anchoring and rehabilitation of the landslides.

As milestones in nature protection planning and forecasting are the National Strategical Programme (1996) and the National Action Plan (1997) in the field of the environment protection, elaborated and adopted in accordance with resolutions of the Conference held in Rio de Janeiro with financial support of the World Bank.

The Ministry of Environment and Territory Development is a body authorized to be engaged in the nature protection activity on behalf of the Government. It is responsible for the implementation of relevant United Nations conventions. The UNCCD implementation is coordinated by the National Commission to Combat Desertification (NC), set up in 2000, which is attached to the above Ministry. In its activity NC is guided by the mandate on the UNCCD implementation, approved in March 2000 by the Minister of the Environment and Territory Development. The NC organized translation of the text of the UNCCD in Romanian, some UNCCD materials were translated from English to Romanian and their adapted to Moldova conditions version was published in popular version.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova promotes the creation of necessary institutional, organizational and legal frames to fulfil the UNCCD requirements. The Ministry of Economy and Reforms informed districts administration about main NAP elements and defined main terms of its implementation.

On the whole in Moldova there are more than 30 legislative enactments on the field of environment protection and nature resources utilization. All of them represent basic state strategy in the above area, but they do not exceed the frames of so called "administrative regulating instruments" or "regulating for command and control ". As recent years experience shows, it is necessary to supplement present legislation with normative economy enactments. In this respect there are already some developed and approved legislative enactments, directed to the coming into force of the principle "Polluter pays".

Existing legislation envisages population information and it's participation in decision-making in the field of environmental protection. Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and other laws envisage the right of population to access to information and to healthy environment. The Republic of Moldova was the first state, which ratified Information Access, Public Participation in the Adoption of Environment Issues Resolutions Convention (Orhus, Denmark, 1998).

Process of decentralizing central bodies responsibilities including nature protection area is continuing with the aim to expand responsibilities of the local bodies. Local public bodies have the following rights and obligations: approvements of the local nature resources utilization limits; supervision and control in the field of utilization and regeneration of the nature resources; authorization of the nature resources utilization; development and implementation of measures to protect or regenerate nature resources; taking stock of the nature resources.

At present in the Republic of Moldova, mainly in the towns function more than 200 non-governmental ecological organizations (NGOs) and their branches, actively participating in environment protection, including combat against desertification. Most of them aim at the resolving of different environment protection problems, but only few contribute to the implementation of practical steps to combat desertification.

The main tasks of NAP to combat desertification induced by drought are the following:

- creation on the whole Republic's territory of a green ecological frame of forest belts and bushes for amelioration of hydrological and hydrothermical agricultural lands regimes;
- development of norms and terms of agricultural crops irrigation depending on hydrothermical regime of territory;
- introducing into the crop rotation drought resistant ones (asparcet, winter wheat, sorghum for the grain, Sudan grass, Italian ralgrass, winter barley);
- substantiation of rational nature resources utilization, directed towards stabilization of the landscapes ecological balance in the presence of droughty climate;

- setting up the regional drought monitoring in the frame of National Hydrometeorological Service and development of national agroclimate potential usage depending on desertification processes;
- minimization of drought consequences by forecasting and planning measures for mitigation of their effects on human induced and natural ecosystems.

Among planned measures it is envisaged improvement of institutional and legal base; development and implementation of socio-economic and demographic regional strategies, local action plans for the areas severely affected by droughts and desertification; development of methods for assessment of desertification levels and registration of the drought affected territory parameters; development and implementation of measures to prevent and combat droughts and various forms of soils and ecosystems degradation; implementation of the economic and legal mechanisms system for regulation and stimulation measures for minimizing desertification consequences and combating it; implementation of the sustainable agriculture systems; inventory, zoning, monitoring and implementation of measures to prevent and combat landslides.

The Republic of Moldova is a party of Danube Convention and from 1991 to 1999 it implemented Subregional Programme in the framework of the above Convention partially linked with desertification prevention issues. Said implementation is supposed to take ten years. Major priority measures are oriented at restoring ecological balance of the territories, subjected to desertification processes.

The total costs of activities outlined by the Action Plan are estimated at 568 mln.lei. Measures for ecological rehabilitation of soils and managing agricultural production from the position of sustainability require considerable funds (almost 50 per cent of the total sum for the former and 47 per cent for the latter). The sources of financing are: budget allocations - 2.7 per cent of total costs; own means of economic subjects - 91; contributions by foreign financial institutions, different donors, including foreign ones - 3.6 per cent, extra budgetary funds - 2.7 per cent.

Environment status data and trends of its changing are contained in the following documents: annual environment quality reports, developed by Ministry of the Environment and Territory Development; annual reports on the population health and hygiene status, developed by Ministry of Public Health; periodic field reports on the status of some nature elements such as: land resources (soils), water quality, forest resources, etc; data of the Department for Statistical and Sociological Studies on toxic waste, investments into environment protection.

Due to economical problems present methodology and technology, level of laboratories equipment in the institutional frames do not conform to the international standards. In the conditions of the Republic of Moldova at national level methodology of complex monitoring of the processes of desertification combat is being developed, including: solving the problem of ecological monitoring, based on decentralization of functions and setting up desertification monitoring subsystem; methodical provision of the monitoring - National Ecological Institute, Academy of Sciences; technical provision of monitoring - Ministry of Environment and Territory Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Processing Industry, Ministry of Transport and Communication; creation of material base, monitoring data collection and processing - competent ministries; data integration, processing, coordination of actions in this field.

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